

The Royal Society Athena Prize 2026

Eligibility criteria and notes for nominators

The Athena Prize 2026

The Royal Society Athena Prize ('the Athena Prize') is awarded biennially (in even years) and recognises teams "working in UK academic and research communities, whose work has made a transformative contribution to the advancement of diversity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)."

The Athena Prize aims to:

- Recognise the efforts of teams who have demonstrated **excellence and leadership** in advancing diversity in STEM, making a **substantial and lasting impact** at a national (or widely regional) level
- Champion initiatives that have demonstrable benefit across a broad STEM community.
- Inspire others through innovative, ambitious, and scalable work, encouraging leadership in diversity and inclusion throughout the STEM landscape.

The Athena Prize will be awarded biennially unless, in the view of the Athena Prize judging panel, no suitable candidate team has been nominated. In this situation, the Athena Prize will not be awarded in 2026 and nominations will re-open in November 2027.

The Athena Prize award is a medal and a gift of £5,000. The winning team will also be invited to have their work promoted via the Royal Society's channels, providing them with opportunities to share their project or initiative with wider public audiences.

The Athena Prize judging panel will consider the difference that an initiative or project has made to engendering and supporting a culture of diversity and inclusion within STEM institutions and organisations. The judging panel will consider the following:

- **Progress and impact:** What concrete change has resulted from the initiative? How has it raised the bar for diversity in STEM institutions?
- **Sustainability and reach:** Is there evidence that the project has had a lasting impact or expanded its influence beyond its original context?
- **Innovation and inspiration:** How novel is the approach, and how much does it energise and lead others?
- **Transferability:** Can the initiative be adapted and adopted by other STEM organisations or across disciplines.

Eligibility

- The Athena Prize 2026 will be awarded to a team for significantly contributing to good practice and the advancement of diversity and inclusion in STEM.
- To be eligible to apply, teams must be working in an academic or research community in the UK.
- Teams must be clearly defined, and the names of all team members must be specified on the application. There is no limit on the size of the team that can apply.
- For the purposes of the Athena Prize, “team” includes University STEM departments and faculties. It also includes teams who have founded or are leading a network but does not include all members of a particular network.
- Previous individual or team Athena Prize winners may **not** reapply. Individuals who had formerly been part of a winning Athena Prize team may be included if they are now part of a different team.
- Previously unsuccessful Athena Prize applicants may apply again.
- For the purposes of this Prize, ‘diversity’ is used in its broadest sense and is inclusive to all.
- This prize is by self-nomination from within the team. One team member may propose the project or initiative via the Society’s [Medals and Awards nomination dashboard](#) and should include the names and contact details of every team member and two referees.
- Members of the [Council of the Royal Society](#), and members of the judging panel at the time the award is decided, will not be eligible for the Athena Prize.

Instructions for nominators

Nominations should include:

- Full name and contact details of the nominator who will complete details of the project or initiative (sections listed below). The nominator should be a candidate team member directly involved in the project or initiative.
- Full name and address of the candidate team. The full name of each member making up the nominated team should be given.

- Supporting statement by the nominator to explain the suitability of the candidate team for the Athena Prize.
- The names of two referees from whom further supporting statements could be sought.
- Nominators must not be members of the [Council of the Royal Society](#), or the Athena Prize judging panel.

References – guidance

- Referees must not be members of the [Council of the Royal Society](#), the Royal Society's [Diversity Committee](#) or the Royal Society Athena Prize judging panel.
- **At least one referee should be someone involved with or impacted by the team's initiative or project.**
- The Society will ask for statements from referees within two weeks of the closing date.

Nomination form

The nomination form is comprised of seven sections. The sections and text fields are listed below. It is recommended to draft responses before copying them into the nomination form, although the nomination form can be saved at any point and revisited. Please find a step-by-step overview of each of the sections found in the form.

Section 1: Award Selection/ Eligibility

Does the nominee/nominated team work in the UK? *Please tick the appropriate box and note that this award is only open to teams based in the UK.*

Section 2: Nominator Details

Please fill out the appropriate details. You will be asked about your:

- Title
- Honours
- Preferred contact number
- Current organisation
- Current position

Section 3: Nominee Details

Here you will be asked to provide your team's name.

Section 4: Nomination Details

This is the most detailed of the pages, where you will be filling in information about your project. You will be asked to provide:

- Project title

- A summary of your project or initiative (500 words maximum). *Please ensure you cover the aims of the initiative or project and what you hoped to achieve at the end, how you achieved your aims, your team's role in the activity, timescales, how you measured success and any support or funding received.*

- A statement of support outlining the suitability of your team for the Athena prize (500 words maximum). *Please include information on how your team meets the criteria outlined above in the eligibility section of this document.*

- Details on every member your group and their roles within the team (500 words maximum).

- How your initiative or project has engendered and supported positive change (500 words maximum). *Please include any supporting evidence to demonstrate impact (for example, relevant statistics, supporting statements from individuals who have benefitted from the project, press coverage etc.)*

- Features of your project that are new or innovative in your field of activity (500 words maximum).

- How your initiative or project will be sustained (500 words). *Your answer may include details of how the changes engendered by your initiative or project will be/are being embedded and maintained in your organisation or the wider STEM community in the short- and long-term.*

- Any plans to replicate or extend your initiative or project, or evidence of successful replication or extension (500 words). *Your answer may include details and evidence of how your project or initiative has been shared, adopted or adapted by others in your organisation or the wider STEM community, or details of any plans to do this in the future.*

Section 5: Referees

Please provide 2 referees. Details required on each will be:

- First name
- Last name
- Email Address
- Job title

Submission

Upon completion of the above form, please submit your nomination. Please note the deadline for all applications is 20 February 2026 at 23.59 (GMT).

Contact

For any enquiries about the Athena Prize, please email diversity@royalsociety.org.